

REASONS
OF THE
DECAY
OF THE
Clothing-Trade.

Humbly offered to the
PARLIAMENT:

With some Short
Proposals of Redress.

*By a Well-wisher to that Trade, and the true
English Interest.*

LONDON,

Printed for Randal Taylor, near Stationers-Hall, 1691.

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PARLIAMENT

With some Spec

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English

LONDON

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TH E Woollen Manufacture of our *English* Nation being the chief Support of our Foreign Trade, and the Master-wheel of all Trade at home (as will appear by the due Consideration of the Multitudes of People that it directly employs, afterwards, by its immediate Effects of Raw-Silk, Grogerome, Yarn and the like, and the many Trades that have their whole dependance upon this) doth justly claim our chieftest Care to its Encouragement and Reputation: Experience shewing us, that when this fails, it hath a speedy Influence upon all others, and soon upon the whole Nation; and I think I may add, without Ostentation, that no part of the World doth now equal us in the Curiosity of this Commodity either for Cloth or Colour, I wish I could add in general. And the exact making of a good Piece of Cloth requires as great Care and Judgment as any Commodity in the *English* Nation, there being so many Particulars belonging to it, a Miscarriage in each of which spoiling the Curiosity of the whole design; and, being brought to its due Perfection, (for its Beauty and Usefulness) is the best Commodity in the whole World. And since Providence hath seemingly afforded us this as our particular Lot, with more Conveniences to bring it to its due Perfection, than any other part of the World; as is evident by the Goodness of our Wool, Fullers-Earth, Quick-Rivers and the like; we must be strangely stupid to our own Interest, if we suffer the Reputation of it to be lost by any undue Courses, the Price of it inhauc'd by any unnecessary Attendants, the Nation being herein wounded in its tenderest Part, many other Nations being in Competition, and as it were at a Contest with us in all our Foreign Markets,

kets, with this Commodity; or that the Just and due Profit of it should be carried away by any unreasonable Intruders*.

**Quis virtutem amplectitur ipsam, premia si tollos.*

The whole of this being sufficiently confirmed by those many good Statutes formerly made to guard it against all Inconveniencies; but as the worthy Makers of those good Laws are now asleep, so are their Laws too, and every Man's Rule is freely become his own choice; nay the greatest trial of skill, of late Years, has been, who could make the worst Cloth, which I think doth justly call for the Inspection of this present Parliament.

1. The *First* Reason that I humbly offer, is the abundance of Pinions and Niles that have of late years been made into broad Cloth transported abroad, and sold with no distinction at all from Cloth that is made of good staple Fleece-Wool; great Quantities of this Commodity being made of late years in this Nation, as our Trade of Stuffs and Serges hath increased: it is a sort of short Wool, of the nature of Flax, which the Wool-Combers separate from the long staple Wool, with which they make their Serges and Stuffs. This being made into Broad-Cloth and well prest will deceive a prudent Buyer, but not do above half the Service of well made Fleece-Wool Cloth: many thousand Cloths in a year are made of this Commodity in the Nation, which (to my own knowledge) hath brought a great Disreputation upon our Cloth abroad. By the Statute of King James the first, *Anno quarto cap. 2.* Any such Commodity as this was strictly limited to narrow Cloth, and indeed all sorts of Wool that was any thing of a worse Quality than Fleece-Wool, I mean the best separated from it upon any account, and that narrow Cloth to be distinguished with a plain List on one side, and the other nothing but a Selvidge, that the Buyer of it might know what he bought. The Quantities of this Commodity of Niles and Pinions being now grown so great, it's a Question whether it's best

to limit it to narrow Cloth or not, that sort of Cloth being now more out of use than formerly. But it is most agreeable to Reason and Justice, that it should be distinguished from good staple Fleece-Wool Cloth, which I propose by making one plain black List not ropt, and the other white, in all sorts of Cloth that it is made into; which will be no Hindrance or extraordinary Charge to the Cloth, only to shew the Buyer what it is made withal: That there may be a power lodg'd in the Overseers of the Poor in every Parish in *England* to seize any such Cloth that is otherways made; to distribute some part to the Informer, the Remainder to be divided by their discretion amongst the Poor, any Charge that should happen, to be bore by the Commodity. If any Question arise about the Cloth the Owner to be put to his Oath, and this Act to be read once every Year in all Clothing Places: nothing would more mend the Price of ordinary Wool than this, hereby this Commodity would be known at all our Markets, and sold according to its merit; the Price so much lessen'd, that it would come into many hands that wear no Cloth, being not able to come to the Price of it; and certainly avoided by many that are now deceived by it, and hinder'd from wearing good Fleece-Wool Cloth that they expected: But, that which is chiefest, we shall secure the Reputation of our Fleece-Wool Cloth abroad; which is no small Advantage to any Commodity, as appears by our *Colchester-Bays*, which carry the whole Trade of the World (in that Commodity) by their due preservation of the good making of them.

2. The next is the Excessive straining of our Cloth, which is become a general practice in all Cloth that is exported, and indeed the common shelter of all bad making of Cloth in general. A Cloth that is but five quarters wide, when strain'd out, set and dry, will make as fair a shew at Market as that of six, and few but may be deceived by it; all Irregularities in Breadth and Length being hereby in a great

great measure stilled: Besides, it frustrates the End of good dressing of Cloth; the chiefeſt care being now to make the Cloth look well to the Eye, after ſtrain'd and fitted for a Market; which End being ſeryed, the Cloth muſt needs wear too high after ſhrunk and made into a Garment; ſo the true end of good dressing of Cloth loſt to ſerve a falſe. Besides many other Inconveniencies that might be urged upon that ſcore. How far the reputation of our *English* Cloth is liable to ſuffer hereby, I leave to better Judgments, only add, that it is too much encouraged and uſed by our Merchants. That there ſhould be a Statute made that no Cloth of what nature ſoever ſhould be ſtrained above one Yard in twenty in the Length of the Cloth, and one Nail of a Yard in Breadth upon forfeiture of the Cloth. That all Cloth-Drawers in the City of *London* ſhould be ſworn to diſcover any Cloth that comes to their Hands that ſhrunk any more than this, and to have ſome Reward for the Diſcovery. All Cloth that is exported going through their Hands, and the Hot Iron that they uſually uſe to preſs their Work, the fitteſt Means to diſcover it. This being done, it would have a good Effect upon Mens Care in making of good Cloth, and in great measure answer thoſe many Searches that have lately been propoſed, by a Bill, to the Parliament.

The goodneſs of Cloth in it ſelf muſt, in great measure, be left to the Judgment of the Buyer, if he plainly ſees the Condition of it, his Price will be juſtly guided; and there is nothing will quicken Mens care more in any Commodity than a certain Loſs in a Failure.

3. The next Inconveniency that our Clothing Trade ſuffers under, is, the many Wool-Broghers, or Ingroſſers of Wool that are ſprung up theſe late Years, calling themſelves by the Names of Wool-Staplers, but never bring a Pound of Wool to a Staple in a Year. They buy up great Quantities of Wool in ſeveral Counties, bring it up to *London*,
divide

divide it into two or three sorts or more ; then sell it or send it down to Clothiers in all clothing parts of *England* ; they come down thirty or forty Miles towards clothing places, buy up the Wool, bring it to *London* and divide it, and afterwards send it through those parts again ; their breaking of this Wool into sorts, no real advantage to the Clothiers, but very often the contrary, for little so exactly done but must be parted again, in the exact way of making of Cloth : These Men buy their Wool in different Counties, their design not to make it into Cloth, but to order it for the advantage of sale, and are not careful to keep the different Counties Wool apart, but rather the contrary, to make two Counties of good Wool sell off one that is but indifferent, in pursuance of their interest ; hereby these Counties Wools being of differing proof and scouring, as most Counties are, many rowy and cuckly Clothes are made, that the Clothier can't possibly avoid, it being the Clothiers greatest care always to use a Counties Wool by itself, this being a great advantage by the equal proof of the Cloth in the Mill : And no Clothier but may fit himself with any sort of Wool from the Breeder, that his occasion requires, and have it directly to his own House, without any inconveniency of more sorts than he hath occasion for : or if so, he may spin it into Yarn and fairly sell it again. These Men buy up most of their Wool in the Summer, and send down a great part of it into the Country in the Winter, by which means, thro' the wetness of the Ways, and the neglect of Carriers, the Wool most times receives wet, which is very prejudicial to the working of the Wool, and the making of good Cloth. By the Rules of Reason, and having Charity for their Sellers, these Men should have a hard Task to get a Livelihood, but we too plainly see the contrary, and that they carry away a great share of the profit of the Clothing Trade, live very splendidly, and come to great Estates. What Civilities the Breeders receive more from these Men, than they did formerly.

merly from the Clothiers, is to me uncertain, but the whole Practice of their Trade, is plainly against the Statute of *Edward the Sixth*, *Anno quinto*, ch. 7. And I think more strictly to be made, if possible, as may yet a little farther appear.

4. These lead me directly to another sort of Men, that are their great Assistants, called Factors, or indeed their Brethren in a higher Form, Ingrossers of *Spanish* Wool. These at first set up, (or crept in unawares) and their Original not quite out of memory, to assist the Clothiers in selling their Cloth to the Merchants and Woollen-Drapers, and sending down their Money, and to have a small Salery for doing it: But now, to admiration, become the chief Masters of the Clothing Trade, they buy up and ingross into their hands, almost all the *Spanish* Wool that comes into *England*, then sell or send it down at their own Prizes to the Clothiers; their usual profit being two Pence in a Pound in Price, and four Pounds in Tare, less in the Bag of Wool than the Merchant allows them, which makes near three Pence; so that there is not a Nobleman in the Nation that wears a Sute of *Spanish* Cloth (the most reputable wear in the World) but doth in effect pay two Shillings Factoridge. Their Saleries afterwards for selling the Cloth, as they set themselves, (who being linkt by one common Interest, and the Makers of the Cloth in effect become their Servants) are sure enough on their sides. But this as to *Spanish* Wool. They find a way likewise to get a Salery out of most of the *English* Wool, that these Wool-Broakers send down to their Clothiers, and usually five Shillings in a Pack: The support of this Salery being partly upon this score, these Factors have the whole management of their Clothiers Estates; these other can't well be secure of their Money, or know well whom to trust, but by these Factors assistance. But here's a further cunning in the matter, As these Factors have a certain advantage by this Wool, they will be sure to encourage

rage the Cloth that is made of it, and manage many of the Clothiers so, that they shall not be able to buy any other way : And so their Interests jump. The Wool-Brogher to serve the Wool at his price, the Factor to have half a Crown in a Clothier's Wool down, five Shillings in a Cloth for selling the Cloth to the Merchant, and the value of this Cloth about seven Pounds.

The Interest of these Men, thus joyn'd, and being always at *London*, to observe all Opportunities of Trade, and improve their Interest with Merchants, and the Clothiers for most part in the Country, hath prevail'd so far, that there are many thousand Cloths made in a Year, where (I dare affirm) the Makers of them do not get one Shilling in a Cloth : And they easily find out such Men in all Countries, that will catch at an empty reputation, and answer their ends, and when the Wheel's once going round, there's no stop. And those Clothiers, that will not follow this Pipe, have their Cloth laid by, and their Money possibly us'd to encourage those that bring this extraordinary profit : And the command of *Blackwell-hall* Markets being so much in their power, most of the Trade is carried in this chanel ; to change from one of these great Factors to another, no remedy, being all governed by one Interest ; nay farther, these Men are great dealers in these Pinions and Niles, I think I may add, equal Promoters of our *English* Interest, or as our Proverb, *Like to like* *. These, as the useless Cions of the Tree, draw away great part of the Sap, and bear no Fruit, nay, which is worse, starve the Branches that would bear : the one a Coach, a Country-house ; the other forc'd to come up in a Waggon to save charges : † This doth certainly reflect upon the Clothiers themselves to be thus managed, and possibly would not be so ingeniously own'd, did not necessity require it, and their interest so plainly overpower'd ; but

* *Similis simili
gaudet.*

† *Si natura negat,
facit indignatio ver-
sum. Juv.*

think it the greatest wisdom to make an Appeal before quite swallowed up, there remaining no possibility of withstanding their force: *

* *Ne pars sincera
trahatur. Ovid.*

In your Account made up, in which you are usually brought something in their Debts, you have so much Money standing out to such and such Men; if you are uneasy, and go and ask any of these Men for Money, you disoblige your Factor, and get nothing by it neither, for these Men buying a great many Mens Cloth, and keeping a general Account with the Factor, will know no particulars; and so you are forc'd to an implicit Faith; and their exact knowledge of the strength of your Stock and Weekly Expence, is better to them than auricular Confession. So that many of your great Factors manage some of their Clothiers as exact as their Watches: The interest of *Rome* is plainly out-done; if uneasy, no help for it: So where a War can't be continued to advantage, it's good making the best Peace a man can, and turn to the other point, and endeavour to become a Favourite, and exercise the thoughts about a good Side of Bacon, or rather than be out-done, the whole Pig, or to get the largest Coller of Brawn, a little suitable to the quality of the Receiver. And, as well as out-done this way, we are quite hinder'd from shewing our own Cloth to Merchants at *Blackwel-Hall*, unless in the open Court; for the whole Hall is so taken up with these Factors, that there's no room but in their standings: we pay the Hospital all the charge of taking in and keeping account in sending out, and are wholly shut out; if you shew any Cloth in any of their Standings, you must be sure to pay Factoridge. Their right in a Standing, after Possession, (by the leave of the Hospital) is not reckon'd much less than a Fee simple, if they have Heirs, I cannot tell whether disposable by Will; but we find (too often to our Loss) that it is of a shorter tenure, but however still full, and many times such contests for Standings, that it wants good Judgment to decide. These Factors come to
Market

Market in their Morning-Gowns and Slippers, their Honour in the way, proportionable to their Clothiers in Town, and the greatest Inconveniency that is to them, is, many times our Country Waggon in *Blackwel-Hall* Court are much in their Coaches way; and the poor Carriers oft times (at their first coming up) are so scar'd to make way and move their poor Cattle for this great splendour and Gallantry, that they scarce recover their Senses until a Mile out of town, and then bless themselves for their great deliverance from some Nobleman's Coach; * I must confess I have not yet heard much of their Heraldry: and hope we shall have some Credit in the † Settlement. Thus much of *Charybdis*, but here's || *Scylla* too.

black Legs to their Ladies; and so great a Mortification that it must be changed, if by Act of Parliament.

|| *Ecce iterum Crispinus, & est mihi sæpe vocandus*
Ad partes, monstrum nulla virtute redemptum. Juvenal.

* *Quis cælum terris
 non misceat & mare
 cælo?* Juven.

† *Harpalus à coma,
 eques ab ore rupe.* E-
 rasim. Factors, -- so
 flat---like the Swans

The numbers of these *Blackwel-Hall* Factors are so much increased within these ten or fifteen Years, by their taking so many Apprentices, that the Cloth Trade is not able to support them, (had they not been out in their politicks, in this point, I should have thought they had ingrossed all the Craft to themselves:) and these often plac'd according to their Friends Ability in setting them up; no more being required to set up a Factor than an Ink-box and two Quires of Paper: And these Apprentices having as well learnt their Masters way of Living as their Trade, begin accordingly, giving out at first that there's a good Estate in the Country, or a fair Estate some other way, to incourage their Credit; which hath hitherto prov'd still reversional, when to help the Clothiers at a dead lift; neither can it, in reason, be otherwise expected: And going on as they begun (there being a necessity for that) and the Profit of the Trade not answering, they begin to spend the Clothiers Money, (being rea-

dy at hand) and, after some considerable time, make a

* *Quæ tam Festa
dies ut cessat prodere?*
Hor. Were it not to
spoil the Poet's verse.

Breach. * There has been lost to our Clothiers, (within this ten or fifteen years) by the *Blackwell-Hall* Factors, I believe, 40000 *l.* besides, possibly, as great a sum, that they have been the occasion of, that hath been lost by other men; to give an Account of the Practices that they have been guilty of, and the many abuses they have used to our Clothing Trade, is a Task too difficult for me to undertake, and so copious, that I know not where to begin †: And our Clothing Trade decreasing, and these Factors increasing; I would not insure (if capable) for so many years to come, for more Money.

† *Inopem me copia
fecit.*

This is the true and impartial Account of the best part of the Clothing Trade of *England*, and its management; I know not now what to propose better in this case, than the following of the good example of our Saviour, in his turning out the Money-Changers out of the Temple, to drive them

* *Grex totus in a-
gris, unius scabie cadit.*
Juv.

all out of *Blackwell-Hall*, and overturn their Standings. || And if they are excused from the Scourge, I think it a kindness beyond some of their merits, (for should some of these receive but one single stripe from each Clothier that they have cheated and abused, *Jefferies* would be out-done in his Politicks; for we have many poor Women in the Country, suffering under these Calamities, that would charge their Husbands to strike home) * sparing neither

* *Necessitas durum
rebum.*

Agagite nor *Amalakite*; this Country nor that; but putting us all once more upon equal Terms, and our due possession of *Blackwell-Hall* into our hands, whose right it is so long as we pay the Duty. And if it doth appear to be any kindness to our Trade, to have any the like Assistance, we can easily find out such Men in the Country, that will be fit to mannage it (the honest mystery of the Fa-

ctors

ctors Trade being easy to be understood) and limit them from such practices, that we see the inconveniency of, now, whom the example of these may a little scare for some years, and I think as much need of an example as on *Bagshot-Heath*, it being wholly impossible to limit these

Mens Interest *. Neither do I think the withdrawing of these Mens Stocks, will at present be much inconveniency to the Trade,

* *Canem vetulum lo-
ri affuefcere difficile,
Erat. Nothing but
Hanging.*

the Clothiers own will run the freer, and possibly thrive the better, for being separate, and not so much credit given: And any Clothier that is ingenious at his Trade, will find as much kindness from some *Merchants* and *Woollen-Drapers*, the former of these possible as willing to Credit the Clothiers as they do now the Factors, and be willing to direct them in any particular of the Trade, as well as these Men do now.

And how far the Interest of the whole Nation doth suffer by these Practices (when there is not one yard of fine Cloth that goes abroad, but is advanced hereby, six pence in a yard, where we shall meet the near Industry of the *Dutch* and many others striving to out-do us) I leave to better Judgments.

But if the necessity of our Trade doth require such Men, we had best send them out of the Country, where we will be sure to follow the prudent and wary Example of our good Father *Jacob* to his Son *Joseph*, who made him put his hand under his thigh, and swear that he would not bury him in the Land of *Egypt*: and should the good old Patriarch be thus careful that his Body should not remain in so slavish a Land, it would strangely reflect upon us, in a greater Deliverance, to be less mindful to secure our selves against a relapse; Nay, farther, to pursue the *simile* (old wit being as good as new) to make these Men put their hand upon the Key of *Blackwell-Hall* Door (before entrance) and swear that they will never turn it, or enter, but to promote the Interest of their Principals, according to the best of their Judgments,

ments, and to be abjur'd against buying of Wool of any sort, directly or indirectly, or taking of any Money from any Clothier for procuring any Wool, by the strictest Test: to take no Apprentices, and their Salaries fixt; and not to be admitted upon these terms, without a firm Testimonial of their Fidelity, under the Hand-Writing of so many Clothiers.

These, with many other good things that may be thought on, to be the Statutes of the Hall, to be observed by the Governours.

5. The last reason that I humbly offer, is the Abundance of our *English* Wool that hath, of late Years, been carried into *France* and other Places (as I have been credibly inform'd;) and it is thought, by many wise Men, that the strictness of that Statute doth not so well answer the End, as if the Interest and full Advantage of any Wool that shall at any time be secured or discover'd, should come with all possible Ease into the Hands of those that secured or discovered it, without much trouble; many Men making a scruple at the taking away a Man's Life on that score, and that *France* hath an Interest by that Statute. But this is fitter for better Judgments, and I shall offer no more than my own Knowledge.

Every Pound of Wool carried away unmanufactur'd, is the value of the Wool lost that way to the Nation, in the common way of Trade: whatsoever worsted Wool, above treble, that by the help of ours mix'd with their own, it answers that End that otherwise it would not do, which is our greatest Loss. That, some few years ago, we had some *French* Men in our Parts that bought some Cloth of us; but in all likelihood, their Design was chiefly to satisfy themselves in the Curiosity of our Trade, as did appear by their exact notice of our Mills, and curious Observations of many Particulars of our Trade; at the same time our Sheermakers were altogether employ'd in making of Sheers for *France*:

France : soon after which our Woollen Cloth was stopt, by the extraordinary Duty imposed by the *French* King, which hath been a great stop to our Trade ever since.

Thus I have humbly offer'd, in matters of Fact, a true and unprejudiced account of the Hindrances of our Clothing Trade, and the methods of its Retrieve, to the best of my judgement, which I hope will be better seconded ; and humbly submit to this honourable Parliament, how far the Publick Interest, Honour and Reputation of our *English* Nation suffers hereby.



F I N I S .
